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BOOK REVIEWS AND NOTICES

Marketing Perishable Farm Products. By A. B. ADAMS. (Columbia University Studies, LXXII, No. 3.) New York: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1916. 8vo, pp. 180. \$1.50.

This monograph deals with the marketing of only "perishable" farm products, in which category the author includes vegetables, fruits, and dairy and poultry products. After pointing out certain characteristics of the problem, and presenting a good description of the present method of marketing perishables, the marketing system is described as a "burden to society," on account of certain defects, which are enumerated as follows (p. 76): great fluctuations in prices, wide margins between prices in different sections (indicating faulty distribution among markets), losses from decay of the goods, and the great average difference between what farmers receive per unit and what consumers pay per unit for the same products.

After discussing the reasons for these defects, the author proceeds, under the chapter heading "Reform of the Marketing Processes or Machinery," to give an able justification of the present scheme of marketing organization, and to show the impossibility of simplifying it by the elimination of middlemen, or, in other words, by more direct marketing. He then proceeds to describe the means of "reduction of the costs" through government marketing departments, co-operation, and "elimination of inefficient practices through competition between the marketing agencies." He would have the Office of Markets given regulative rather than merely investigative power; he would have the cities build wholesale terminal markets; and he would compel the railroads "to come together and furnish one central terminal (possibly two or three for New York City) for unloading all the perishables which enter those markets." In conclusion, the author finds a possible "reduction of the burdens" through refrigeration and manufacturing (the canning process), reduction of seasonal production, and the development of centralized producing sections.

Although this treatise contains much valuable information and many helpful ideas, it is open to adverse criticism on many points. One fundamental defect arises from the attempt to segregate perishables and treat

them as one class. These commodities are not a "fairly homogeneous class" from the marketing standpoint, as stated in the Preface (p. 5). The methods of marketing butter, poultry, and eggs not only differ one from another, but vary considerably from the methods of marketing fruits and vegetables, and many of the statements made by the author apply only to the latter classes of commodities. Too much stress is laid on the differences in prices in different sections of the country as indicative of poor distribution among markets. To compare Massachusetts prices of eggs with those in Missouri and Arizona (p. 18), and Massachusetts prices of butter with those of Tennessee is poor proof that these commodities are poorly distributed among the various markets. Several factors, including the relation between prices in producing as compared with those in consuming sections (a phase not given sufficient attention by the author) account for these differences in prices.

In fact, faulty distribution among markets is grossly exaggerated by the author. The distribution of butter, eggs, and poultry among the various markets is well-nigh perfect; even in the case of fruits and vegetables the situation is not nearly so bad as is commonly thought. Serious gluts in certain markets, with simultaneous scarcities in others are not so common as the author would have us believe. It is generally found that when there is a glut in one market there are gluts in all markets. Even with the most perfect marketing system imaginable, such widespread gluts cannot be prevented in the case of highly perishable commodities which fluctuate greatly in quantity produced from year to year, and which ripen irregularly during a single season, owing to varying weather conditions. Since the author accepts the popular misconception on this point as one of the bases of his treatise, the reader must be on his guard.

To describe the marketing system as a "burden to society" because it has defects, is misleading and does not help to develop a scientific point of view in studying this important problem. As well might one say that the railroads are a burden to society because of ill-adjustment of rates in certain cases, and because of other defects in the transportation system. The reviewer prefers to look on the marketing system as a boon to society; whatever its defects, he feels that it is remarkable that any system has developed at all which makes it possible to market Florida strawberries or California cantaloupes in New York City, at such a cost as to make it worth while for the growers in Florida and California to raise these products, and to make it possible for consumers in New York to buy them.

Many other points might be criticized. For example, we are told (p. 32) that middlemen's associations have "accomplished less than nothing in the way of evident improvements and the system has constantly grown worse in their hands." The author apparently does not appreciate the part played by produce exchanges in bettering the conditions in the butter and egg trades, as well as in the fruit and vegetable trades, in practically all of our large cities; nor of the influence of such national associations as the National League of Commission Merchants and the National Poultry, Butter, and Egg Association. We are told (p. 20) that it is "far more difficult to ascertain the cost of marketing agricultural products than that of marketing manufactured goods." The reviewer's experience has been otherwise, for the simple reason that manufacturers commonly assume more marketing functions than farmers and that it is difficult to obtain a segregation between manufacturing and selling costs.

The whole work gives one the impression that possibly the author had preconceived notions, which still show themselves in some of the chapter headings and statements of problems involved, but which are not borne out by the actual facts gathered and presented in the monograph. The seriousness of the defects in the marketing system and the possibilities of improvement are both exaggerated. It is encouraging, however, that this author finds that the present organization through functional specialization is sound, and that he proposes no revolutionary scheme of reform.

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The Principles and Methods of Municipal Administration. By WILLIAM BENNETT MUNRO. New York: Macmillan, 1916. 8vo, pp. ix+491. \$2.25.

Some three years ago, when his *The Government of American Cities* appeared, Professor Munro promised us a volume dealing more fully with the problems of municipal administration. The present work is the fulfilment of that promise. Its purpose, as its title indicates, "is to show how various city departments are organized, what work they have to do, and what problems they usually encounter in getting things done." The discussion is confined almost wholly to the experiences of cities in the United States, though there is no lack of comparison with European cities, especially in the treatment of city planning, waste disposal, and police.